

Data Sheet

USAID Mission:	Belarus
Program Title:	Citizen Participation in Democratic Practices
Pillar:	Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
Strategic Objective:	113-0210
Status:	Continuing
Proposed FY 2003 Obligation:	\$3,900,000 FSA
Prior Year Unobligated:	\$2,527,000 FSA
Proposed FY 2004 Obligation:	\$5,080,000 FSA
Year of Initial Obligation:	FY 1999
Estimated Completion Date:	FY 2005

Summary: The USAID program in Belarus promotes civil society participation, a strengthened democratic political process, and development of independent media through technical assistance, training, and small grants to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the independent media, and technical assistance and training to pro-democracy political parties.

Inputs, Outputs, Activities:

FY 2003 Program:

Increased effectiveness of democratically-oriented Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (\$1,800,000 FSA). USAID will advance its community initiative program, aimed at involving citizens in democratic decision making. Two approaches will be used for implementation of the program: support to "capacity-related" community initiatives and capacity building for NGOs in those communities. Ten sites will be selected for training in democratic governance, community appraisal, and support in the formation of representative community project boards. USAID technical assistance and grants will provide these communities with the resources to promote a greater flow of information on issues which are important to and identified by the citizens. A grant competition will also support NGO projects that mobilize targeted communities for participation in community initiatives. The NGO training in these communities will cover areas of governance, membership and volunteer recruitment, fundraising, strategic planning, and public advocacy. Principal contractor/grantees are Counterpart International, Inc. and the Eurasia Foundation (prime).

Elevated responsiveness of political parties to public needs (\$1,050,000 FSA). USAID will focus on the following areas for the pro-democracy party training, technical assistance, and cross-border exchanges: internal governance practices, effectiveness of strategic planning and operations, membership recruitment and retention, and message formulation. The latter involves building party public relations and media communications skills, and improving the capacity for productive use of public opinion research. These activities will assist the national and regional political party network to identify issues resonating with the people and build their platforms around them. A civic organization will be established that conducts public awareness campaigns to educate Belarusians about their constitutional rights and democratic electoral processes. Principal contractors/grantees are the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). (prime).

Support to independent media (\$700,000 FSA). USAID's assistance will improve the professional skills of non-state media owners and professionals, including publishers, accountants and journalists; strengthen the legal and financial status of independent media; and increase the journalists' capacity to provide the public with objective, fact-based, and useful information. USAID will work with independent print and electronic media, the latter including private regional TV and radio stations. The technical assistance will include a wide range of expert services: journalism and management training, legal defense, on-site business consultations, and free-of-charge service provision (e.g., photo archive, Internet access, specialized software development and transfer, etc.). The principal contractor/grantee is the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).

Increased legal defense capacity (\$350,000 FSA). USAID plans to extend the current program promoting human rights and the rule of law by continuing to train local lawyers, activists, the free trade unions, NGOs and the citizenry to advocate for greater respect by Belarusian authorities. Continued support will be provided to the network of Legal Advice Centers. The principal contractor/grantee is the American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Institute (ABA/CEELI).

FY 2004 Program:

Increased effectiveness of democratically-oriented CSOs (\$2,780,000 FSA). USAID expects to expand the community improvement initiative program to ten new, competitively-selected locations and to provide follow-on awards to communities who previously successfully implemented prior initiatives. The CSO training and grant program will match the activities in targeted communities. The principal contractor/grantees are Counterpart International and the Eurasia Foundation (prime).

Elevated responsiveness of political parties to public needs (\$1,250,000 FSA). USAID technical assistance priorities may be related to the Parliamentary election: campaign planning and management; public and media relations, door-to-door activities, etc. The civic election observation network is expected to be operational and able to conduct public awareness campaigns on electoral rights and democratic electoral practices and watchdog and observation functions during elections. The principal contractor grantees are IRI and NDI.

Support to independent media (\$700,000 FSA). USAID will continue focusing on the financial viability of the independent media, introducing alternative distribution systems to counter the government's discriminatory distribution price structure. Media professionalism and legal expertise will remain a high priority as the government continues to suppress the media with libel suites and other forms of harassment. The FY 2003 activities will be continued in FY 2004. The principal contractor grantee is IREX.

Increased legal defense capacity (\$350,000 FSA). The program will continue to focus on enhancing the ability of lawyer and non-legal Belarusians to demand that the government respect the rights of individual citizens. FY 2003 activities will continue in FY 2004. Their principal contractor grantee is ABA/CEELI.

Performance and Results: Civil society organizations were provided with training to improve their expertise in protecting their constituency's rights. As a result, about 40% of the training recipients employed these techniques in their work. Based on the successes of USAID's 2002 NGO Sustainability Development Project, eight rural clubs throughout all the regions of Belarus were established. These clubs provided community members with access to information, technical instruction, and a forum to discuss issues of local importance.

USAID political process strengthening program in Belarus has developed into an intensive, in-country, broad-coverage program with the main focus on the organizational capacity of pro-democracy forces. Some positive trends in party development can be attributed to USAID assistance: at least one party used the new skills to develop its national platform and several parties, including their regional branches, developed campaign plans for the local 2003 elections.

The USAID media development program increased business viability of the media and the quantity and quality of objective information. Under the distance learning initiative that began in 2002, approximately 30 well-researched articles are generated per month. Technical assistance provided to the regional independent TV stations resulted in the production of more than a hundred documentaries that were presented at the First National Regional TV Festival Focus 2002. These documentaries also were presented numerous times on all of the independent stations. As a result of business planning seminars and on-site consultations, six newspapers drew up business plans. These plans represent a first and important step toward their business viability. Market research gave the major newspapers tools to approach advertisers, and several local newspapers raised their advertising revenues. By the end of the program, a nightly news bulletin will be established using the network of regional TV stations, to provide a balanced alternative to the state-controlled media.

US Financing in Thousands of Dollars

Belarus

113-0210 Citizen Participation in Democratic Practices	ESF	FSA
Through September 30, 2001		
Obligations	165	22,558
Expenditures	65	14,589
Unliquidated	100	7,969
Fiscal Year 2002		
Obligations	0	3,422
Expenditures	78	9,694
Through September 30, 2002		
Obligations	165	25,980
Expenditures	143	24,283
Unliquidated	22	1,697
Prior Year Unobligated Funds		
Obligations	0	2,527
Planned Fiscal Year 2003 NOA		
Obligations	0	3,900
Total Planned Fiscal Year 2003		
Obligations	0	6,427
Proposed Fiscal Year 2004 NOA		
Obligations	0	5,080
Future Obligations	0	0
Est. Total Cost	165	37,487